air, whilst workmen are so completely divided in opinion as to how these details of its application are to be worked out, the Legal Eight Hours, as it is called, may be a formidable demonstration—but it is not practical politics. It is true that all these questions and dilemmas, as set forth above, may be cleared up and got rid of. The present writer would be sorry to say that the difficulties are insuperable, or beyond the scope of patience, good sense, legal and administrative art. But they require an immense amount of labour, thought, and inquiry, which they have not yet received, either inside the Congress or out of it. A highly competent observer, thoroughly informed and of great impartiality and experience, an eye-witness of the discussion at Liverpool, writes thus:—"The present leaders are all alive to the fact that almost none of the resolutions of the Liverpool Congress can be carried out; that every endeavour to do so would cause a rupture between the old unions of skilled men and the new unions; *and that this would be just what the employers want.*" These are the words of one of the staunchest and wisest friends of Unionism now living in Europe. In the face of a judgment like this, workmen and their true friends had better incline to a careful and conciliatory policy, and avoid hurry and premature jubilation.

On the other hand, politicians will do very wrong to make light of what has just happened, or to think, as so many ostriches think in and out of Africa, that it does not concern them, and they can stick a bold head into the sand of their own constituency. The Trades Union Congress has moved with the times. It may be that the recent vote at Liverpool was a mere demonstration. But in these days demonstrations are very important when they show that one party have lost heart, and that the other party have gained it. Suppose nothing more than this—that the delegates of the Unions no longer care to demand legislation on the old Parliamentary and economic lines. Well, that by itself is an immense fact. A Parliament duly elected by a million and a half of the strongest and most thoughtful workmen in these islands meets to settle a proposal which has stirred the trades for some years—and they vote (by a small but resolute majority) to support a Bill which politicians of all colours have hitherto scouted as a wild and ludicrous extravagance. This thing alone is very serious indeed, and implies much. The workmen may be divided, but, as a body, they have ceased to put faith in the old Parliamentary and economic axioms. And they are not likely to put faith in them again, in this generation. Look to it! Candidates, members, and Ministers, it concerns you all very much!

There is abundant evidence that a large, convinced, and solid majority came to Liverpool pledged to support the Miners' Eight Hours Bill; and had the issue turned solely on that, the Bill would have been at once raised to the level of practical politics. Hitherto, the Bill has been treated almost as a bad joke or a hobby. But the resolution of certain groups of miners to agitate for such legislation is now becoming a practical reality. It is easy to see how deeply the Bill sins against all our fixed canons of legislation; against treating adults, as if they were children, by compulsory clauses; against the vices of grandmotherly laws and multiplying inspectors, and by the tyranny of fixing limits to a free man's disposal of his own industry. All this is plain, logical, unanswerable, and, unhappily, most tediously common-place. It is not so easy to show that it would injure mining industry, or inflict personal tyranny, or work intolerable inconvenience, or be impossible to enforce. Miners are already subject to an enormous mass of legislative restriction; their labour is now entirely *sui generis;* the Eight Hours limit is already common. Almost everything else about a miner's industry is so regulated by law that it seems like straining at a gnat to protest against regulating hours by law after swallowing the camel of regulating truck-wages, his lamp, his weighing measures, and all the details which at present surround him in the pit day and night. No doubt the proposal to fix a Legal Eight Hours sins against political economy; but better arguments must be used if Parliament intends to resist a demand should it ever be raised by a united, determined, and intelligent body of workmen, knowing, at any rate, their own mind and their own power.

There is an immense deal of cant now current as to the wickedness and folly of attempting to interfere with the freedom of adults. There are thousands of clauses on the statute-book which limit the free industry of adults in all sorts of ways, and for all sorts of reasons. The public health, convenience, sense of the pleasant, morality, religion, and scores of grounds, are enough to make adults punishable for exercising their talents or their industry in ways they may like. Thousands of police and sanitary regulations, provisions for our comfort, rest, holidays, surround us on all sides. A costermonger may not wallop his donkey, or a knife-grinder harness his dog, or a publican sell a glass of ale, or an apothecary sell opium, or a milkman sell a pint of milk, or a cyclist ride without a lamp, or a "lion comique" sing a broad song, or a "*lionne comique*" wear a short dress or dance a particular jig, without finding the law at hand, the policeman alert, and the magistrate inexorable. An enterprising firm introduce "sky-signs," and the public clamour for a new law to suppress that ingenious form of industry. It is palpably untrue to say that Parliament does not limit the labour of adults. It does so now, even to give the majority a holiday. Why are all the creditors in London compelled to wait for payment on four days in the year in order that other Londoners may run down to the seaside or visit the Crystal Palace? Why are all men by law compelled to cease from their handicraft on Sunday? Why are Jews limited to five days of labour, and why may not an Agnostic cobbler mend our shoes on the Sabbath? What a roar of execration would be raised, how political economy would be invoked, if Lord Salisbury were now to propose *de novo* to make Sunday labour penal! Why do we submit to this and other legislative restrictions on free industry? The answer is, for the sake of social convenience and comfort. Let us be quite sure that a time is coming when the decisive question whereby to test any new legislative proposal will be not, do Adam Smith and Malthus condemn it?—but, will it really contribute to the social convenience and comfort? And this question is one very often quite incapable of being answered *a priori*.

There is, indeed, a mode in which a reduction of hours in labour is practicable without new laws, and without any pretext of tyranny. It is admitted that the present hours of labour are often excessive, injurious to the health, self-respect, and welfare of those who suffer, and thereby a bar to the progress of the community. Labour is now a very different thing from what it was sixty years ago; and an "hour" in these days of factories, steam, and competition means far more strain than an "hour" in the last century. To redress this extra pressure, and to save the community from degradation all round, is really, if we would only see it, a religious duty, to be adequately enforced by a religious and not by a temporal authority. But, in the absence of any competent religious influence, the temporal authority may set a useful example. The State—that is, all of us—employs hundreds of thousands of men and women in our own service, and for our own convenience. Hundreds and thousands of these men and women are over-worked. Let the State then set the example, and be the first to insist that over-work shall cease in its own services and that the public shall not be the great and typical Sweater of the poor. That at any rate would be a beginning; and Political Economy will only be able to grumble: "I could have got the work done cheaper!"

FREDERIC HARRISON.

IRELAND AND MR. BALFOUR'S BLUNDER.

(From a Dublin Correspondent.)

MR. BALFOUR has stirred the still waters of Irish political life with a conundrum to which no man can find an answer. "Why did he arrest and prosecute Dillon and O'Brien?" This is the question which, in one form or the other, all men in Ireland are now putting to each other. "Why did he put the accursed League on its legs?" asks the Conservative. "What on earth induced him to do us such a turn?" queries the Leaguer. "Why won't he allow the poor country to have a moment of quiet?" asks the non-political man who wants to get on in business or at his profession. A few Conservative politicians and journalists keep up a bold show in public, but no man who has even the slightest peep behind the Coercionist scenes doubts that the Balfourian *coup* has caused there the most utter dismay. No doubt this feeling is based in part upon the unfounded feeling of elation which preceded it. Twenty times within the past ten years the Irish Tories believed and proclaimed that the national movement was "a thing of the past." That movement, being carried on by human beings, has its moments of ebb and flow, of action and reaction. It was at a moment of ebb that Mr. Balfour struck his blow. Laying aside all exaggeration, it is certain that there were signs of weariness and signs of dissension. Where are they now? Mr. Balfour has before him a united nation, and behind him a handful of disgusted backers. The Nationalist party is solid again, and all fear of any want of success in the coming appeal to America has disappeared. Why Mr. Balfour, who certainly is no fool, thus played the game of the Irish people, is a question to which I will try and give an answer. It is ludicrous to see in the Chief Secretary a man of blood and iron who, in his absorbing devotion to law, strikes at the criminal in the moment he hears of the crime; strikes at him regardless of all consequences, pursues the stern path of duty, come what may. The question of time disposes of this pleasant theory. The defendants in the new prosecutions are prosecuted in September for speeches they delivered in March. The true reason must, I imagine, be found in the one great fact that the Irishman is never allowed to forget, and that the Englishman never ought to forget. The Irish Government, "the Castle" as it is always called in Ireland, exists only as a giant machine for getting in rents. All this vast machine kept up at the cost of millions, all the huge judiciary, the phalanx of "Removables," the legions of police and military, all stand behind the landlord's bailiff and move at his command. Now rent in Ireland is at this moment in danger throughout vast districts of the country. In the days of the great famine thousands paid their rent punctually one gale day and died of hunger before the next. There is a strong belief in Ireland that this ought not to be done again, that the Western peasant ought only to pay such a rent as would leave him enough to buy as much meal as would keep him and his little family alive till the next potato harvest. Mr. Balfour, and the little group of landlords under whose orders he acts, are of a contrary opinion; they believe in the sanctity of rent, they regard its exaction and payment in full as the whole duty of man. Hence a sharp struggle is expected in the West, and the most rational explanation of Mr. Balfour's *coup* is that it is intended to lock up for the winter the most powerful advocates of the tenants' cause, and to warn all others that six months in gaol will be the portion of those who dare to meddle between angry lord and starving serf. In the meantime no man can doubt what is the political lesson of the arrests. For over three years Mr. Balfour has with great courage, great ability, and a noble absence of all scruple, carried out his policy of "Thorough"! He has had at his back devoted colleagues and an obsequious Parliament. How has he sped? Why, things in Ireland are just where they were at the beginning of the campaign—only perhaps a little worse. The agrarian war blazes in a fierce activity on a dozen great estates. The Castle is more hated than ever. The police, pampered by the Government and worried by popular hatred, are becoming a positive and serious danger. Trade languishes, for no man builds, or lends, or ventures, in a state of things which all men believe to be provisional. And for those whom the people delight to honour there is the sham trial and the prison cell. Mr. Balfour's last step has undoubtedly largely increased the number of that growing body of men who believe with Sir George Trevelyan that the game of coercion is up. As to the agrarian difficulty, the Chief Secretary has undoubtedly added to it a new element of poisonous bitterness. Moderate men of both parties saw in the lull of politics a favourable moment when the quarrel on the campaigned estates might have been settled by an honourable peace which would have left no sting behind. That hope is now at an end. The peacemaker of yesterday, if he continued his efforts, would be the traitor of to-day. Mr. Balfour has determined to fight out his battle with the Irish people, and there is not a sagacious man in the island who doubts what the upshot of the fight will be.

THE SPEAKER'S GALLERY.

X.—Robert Browning.

"HOW strange that Browning should have been buried in Westminster Abbey!" said an old Anglo-Florentine the other day. "Of course, we all knew that he was a good fellow and a clever man, fond of literature and old pictures, but we never looked upon him as a poet: *she* was the poetess." Such was the judgment of one who was a constant visitor at Casa Guidi forty years ago. And it represents the opinion of the world. How strange that one so long neglected and unread should at the end of his life be placed above all the poets of his generation! It is curious, too, that this should be the result, not of any new production, but merely of better appreciation of the old. The last collected edition of Browning's works consists of sixteen volumes, not including "Asolando." The poems which will be longest remembered, and upon which his fame will ultimately rest, are contained in the first seven of these, and were published five-and-twenty years before the poet's death. "The Ring and the Book" did much to diffuse his fame, but nothing to deepen it in the hearts of true admirers. In 1868 the supremacy of Tennyson was unchallenged, now it is more than disputed in comparison with Browning. Such a phenomenon is almost unique in literature. What would Milton's reputation be without "Paradise Lost," Shakespeare's without the *Tempest*, Byron's without "Don Juan," Shelley's without his latest lyrics? Goethe offers the nearest parallel; but the enthusiasm excited by his early works was immense. It is worth while to inquire what was the cause of this long neglect and startling resipiscence.

Browning laid it at the door of the reviewers. Tennyson was introduced to the public by an article of John Stuart Mill's. Browning would have had the same good fortune if a printer's devil had not wanted two more lines of copy. But admiration of "Pauline" might not have made "Paracelsus" and "Sordello" more intelligible. Browning's father wrote poetry, and, like Byron, the god of his idolatry was Pope. Browning's first, and as yet unpublished verses, were Popian and Byronic. He did not invent Browningese till he had left off writing "governess English," a trace of which still lingers in the "Lost Leader" and the "Pied Piper." Browning could hardly expect his public to be in advance of himself. A young man once said to Ruskin, that when he first went to Florence he had singled out Botticelli's "Coronation

of the Virgin" as the finest picture in the galleries. "How fortunate you are!" replied Ruskin: "it is the finest picture, but it took me twenty years to find it out." "Yes," was the answer, "but you had not then read your own books." Even in the early forties, when Browning was about thirty, "Bells and Pomegranates" had its select circle of admirers and purchasers. He was the cynosure of the young enthusiasts who wrote and read the *Leader*. In the fifties a Cambridge undergraduate would hear that Browning was deeply studied at Balliol, and thought superior to Tennyson. The Americans, who have always thrown into the cult of English literature the zeal and earnestness which we reserve for the Greeks and Romans, were perhaps the first to discover that the Tennysonian lyre gave, after all, a tinkling sound, and that Browning's theorbo was deeper in tone and richer in harmonics. Of all this the British public knew little or nothing till the later sixties. "The Ring and the Book" was living, it was intelligible, it was the story of a murder. It also abounded in all the graces and beauties which Browning worshippers had already discerned in his other works. Some were flattered to think that they could understand Browning after all; others were pleased to discover in a poem what they had before only known in Gaboriau. Length also made its impression. It was uncharitable and discourteous to be deaf to a writer who was getting up at five every morning and writing at the peril of his health to show you that he was a poet after all. So "The Ring and the Book" was widely read, and the author was in London. He could be asked to dinner. Byron woke up one morning and found himself famous. Browning appeared in society as an elderly widower, not pedantic, nor wayward, nor intense; so he became the lion, not of one season, but of an entire old age. His earlier works were inquired after and bought; new editions were in demand; Mr. Furnivall and the Browning Society did the rest. Browning said that the establishment of this society laid upon him a greater responsibility to produce good work. Certainly "Jocoseria" is the weakest of his productions.

In Browning, more than in most authors, the man was greater than the poet. From the first he was dominated by three master impulses—a passionate sympathy for human nature and a curiosity about its infinite developments, an intense thirst for knowledge even in its most remote and abstruse forms, and the burning zeal of a prophet to lead mankind to the highest and the best. Thus he did not only reproduce human nature like Shakespeare, but he judged it. His learning had a touch of pedantry. If he did not fuse it into a new alloy like Milton, he did not become its servant like the author of "Romola." In him the prophet was tempered by the man of the world. The indignation of Elijah was subdued by the courtliness of Demodocus. He did not, like George Eliot, habitually pour his best into the ear of his table-companion, stimulating but exhausting, too conscientious to be humorous, too eager to be flippant. His talk was not of Andrea del Sarto and Galuppi, but somewhat too often of Lord This and Sir Something That. Nor did he, like the bard of the Isle of Wight, wander on the edge of a noble down with dishevelled hair and careless clothes, brooding almost continually on the probability of a future state, feeling that this life was worthless if there were no other. Converse with mankind kept him sweet and fresh, till he could spend his autumn solitude on the slopes of the Saléve, or in the enchanted valley of Gressonay, or on the beacon hill of legendary Asolo. Yet this varied play of life and emotion never swayed his central soul. The tinkling of the bells and pomegranates only served to tell the outer world that the high-priest was entering the Holy of Holies.

So far as we know, his spirit had two crises of awakening—Italy and his wife. He went to Italy for the first time when he was just of age. It opened his lips to a new harmony. Russia had made him turn with longing to England. Italy filled him with such affection that he would probably have thought it a special mercy to die there. Whatever he gained from her, he has repaid the debt with interest. If George Eliot's "Romola," or Milton's "Vallombrosa," or Goethe's "Reise," draws the young scholar to Italy, still more potent is the spell which works in innumerable lyrics, whether he describes the Apennines or the lagoon, the villa or the city, the painter or the musician, the Pope, the bishop, or the brigand. His conception of the Renaissance and of the Metternich reaction is equally realistic. His Italian men and women are instinct with a life which we lack in "Romola." We cannot tell what theme took him to that little village, whither many a pilgrim has gone since to see Pippa pass. It must be sufficient that it inspired his masterpiece, even though the idea of it may have come to him in Dulwich wood. "Pippa Passes" is the high-water mark of Browning's genius. It contains, as in a quintessence, all the best qualities of his art, clothed in a perfection of form which is too often lacking in his writings. We find in it exquisite lyrics, various phases of intense tragedy, a broad gamut of life, sounding with equal power from the highest to the lowest tone—pathos, humour, and, above all, the gentle soul of Pippa hovering, scarcely mortal, above the sea of human degradation, like a rainbow over a waterfall, or Ariel at a shipwreck. It is also comparatively free from the charge so often brought against Browning's dramas, that all the characters speak the same language. Not a drama, and incapable of being acted, it is the most dramatic of Browning's works. He was about twenty-six when he wrote this poem, and he never surpassed it.

His next effort was "Sordello," which must also rank as a masterpiece. It is probably the most obscure poem in the English language, but it is well worth studying. It is a pity that the head-lines which were inserted in the edition of 1863 have now been omitted. They have a value of their own besides the light which they throw on the poem. The faults of "Sordello" cannot be altogether defended. Poetry should be clear. Vagueness of expression is only defensible, as in Virgil, where sound becomes an auxiliary to sense. Dante is only obscure in a translation. No writer, not even Plato, ever put such complicated thoughts into such limpid language. "Sordello" is strongly concentrated. He who broods over the lines will not waste his time. The pictures rise up vividly from a few gnarled and knotted words. Still the diction has little music, and the historical basis of the poem is needlessly involved. Here, as elsewhere, Browning drew recklessly on his imagination. The galloping from Ghent to Aix was a ride of the poet's fancy, when imprisoned in a cabin; the journey of Childe Roland, to many students full of mystic ministries, was a dream inspired by a fragment of tapestry; and all we know about Sordello is what Dante has told us—that he was a poet and a Mantuan, and that he looked like a couching lion.

We have buried Browning in Westminster Abbey. What will posterity think of his claim to lie there? In all acts it is difficult to anticipate the judgment of the future, which is after all, in the long run, the true judgment. Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Milton are unassailable. The eighteenth century has scarcely left us an undisputed poetical reputation. Perhaps Gray, Goldsmith, and Cowper have gained much by the lapse of time. Byron is now at his apogee. Shall we ever return to the continental estimate of his worth? The new generation will discuss the comparative merits of Browning and Tennyson as our own discusses those of Byron and Shelley. It is almost certain that posterity will remember nothing which is not fairly intelligible. At the same time, in poetry as in music, the human faculty may accustom itself to new harmonies. Probably Browning's reputation stood highest at the day of his death. Much had to be made up to him. The world repented of its long neglect. Last June "Asolando" was in its sixth edition, "Demeter" in its

second, though Tennyson's editions were probably larger than Browning's. "Asolando" also shows less of the old man. Yet it is safe to affirm that public opinion will again turn to our Laureate, and that the sweet and gentle muse cultivated with such care, instinct with such high purpose, will charm the ears of many generations who may be slow to listen to the harsher voice of Robert Browning.

A LADY NOVELIST REPLIES.

I HAVE read (writes the authoress of some popular works of fiction) a series of articles in THE SPEAKER entitled "To Lady Novelists," but for the life of me I cannot be certain whether they are in our praise or disparagement. Those of my sister-workers with whom I have discussed the series are equally at a loss, for while the writer allows that he prefers ladies' novels to men's, he does so grudgingly, ashamed apparently to write a deliberate untruth, but not glad to acknowledge indebtedness where it is due. This is very characteristic of the male critic, who can no more allow generously that fiction is the true sphere for women than a bully can apologise like a gentleman. Even when this writer allows justice to wring from him the confession that in the treatment of passion (surely the proper subject of the novelist) the lady writer is head and shoulders above the male, a vein of what seems to be hidden sarcasm detracts from the generosity of his words, and again and again it appears to me that he is only saved from attempting covertly to decry us by lack of humour. On the whole, though I allow that he praises us, there is something even in his laudation which, while I cannot quite say what it is, I do not like.

Were I asked in what the novels of ladies are noticeably superior to those of men, I should reply, in the first place, in *humour*. The writer of "To Lady Novelists" omits humour from his consideration altogether, not, I think, because of jealousy, but because, as I have already said, he is curiously wanting in humour himself. Curiously wanting, I say as a woman, though he shares this infirmity (for it is nothing less) with the most of his sex. It is humour that makes the characters in fiction real to the reader, and hence the enormous popularity of John Strange Winter and the authoress of "Molly Bawn," who are undoubtedly the two leading humorists of the day. Until the first-mentioned of these writers published the delightful "Bootles' Baby," which Mr. Ruskin (one of the few men of eminence who has a keen sense of humour) justly calls a work of genius, how little was known to us of the English officer! Yet hundreds of male writers have treated of military life. But with what a difference! Compare Bootles, who lives before us, with, for instance, the trumpet-major in Mr. Hardy's novel, or with Sergeant Troy in "Far from the Madding Crowd" (the heroine of which is a libel on womanhood). Mr. Hardy is a painstaking writer, yet who will say that his soldiers are real human beings, as John Strange Winter's are? In short, Mr. Hardy fatally lacks humour.

How superior, too, is the lady novelist in refinement! Surely this alone would be sufficient excuse for her existence. Her pages are seldom soiled by the vulgarity which may without exaggeration be called the trade-mark of the male novelist. I shall say nothing of Dickens (surely the vulgarest writer that ever put pen to paper), except that such characters as Sam Weller and Mrs. Gamp would tarnish a better-deserved reputation. He, however, lived in an age when there were few lady novelists to raise the tone of fiction, while his successors are almost equally vulgar without that excuse. I dare say the writer of "To Lady Novelists" will tell me that to be humorous is necessarily to be vulgar, but I shall reply by referring him to the imperishable "Molly Bawn." The book is full of humour, yet it is always of the chastest, most lady-like kind. Compare the humour of "Molly Bawn" or "Phyllis" with that of, say, "The Egoist" (of which I admit I have not read the whole), and you are in a position to know the difference between humour and the licence that apes it.

I am not sure whether the writer of "To Lady Novelists" really admires Ouida. He says he does, but in language that is capable, I think (though I may be wronging him), of a double meaning. Yet Ouida is the greatest of all novelists in that passion which I have already called the most legitimate subject of fiction. As a humorist she is delightful, and her refinement is as true as it is elevating; but in these departments she has rivals, while in passion she is without a peer.* Of wines it has been said that claret is for boys, port for men, and champagne for heroes; I may paraphrase this remark and say that Scott, Stevenson, and such-like, are for boys, Thackeray, Dickens, Fergus Hume, and Hall Caine for men, and Ouida for heroes. Anyone can describe fights with pirates (of which Mr. Stevenson's books are full), and whoever has an eye for the little things about him can photograph people in the street after the manner of Dickens and Thackeray. But passion is of the soul. When two souls love, then is the clash of worlds. Passion lifts man into the realms of poetry, and his feelings are no longer those of this mundane planet. It gives him a seat among the gods of Olympus, which he has won by conquest. Does not Ouida thrill the brain and make the eyes leap in their sockets when she approaches the subject of a fatal passion? And how do male writers act when there are the same possibilities before them? They run away! Did Ouida ever run away from a scene of passion? Did Scott ever face one? We have only to open the Waverley Novels (first blowing the dust off them!) to see what a jump there is between Scott and Ouida. At present Mr. Irving has quite revived fashionable interest in Scott, which is my excuse for having a copy of "The Bride of Lammermoor" by me. I turn to Ravenswood's proposal to unhappy Lucy Ashton (unhappy in having so cold a lover), and here is all Scott gives us as recompense for reading nearly two hundred pages of preliminary (we are half through the story before there is a word of love-making in it!)—"Lucy wept on, but her tears were less bitter. Each attempt that the Master made to explain his purpose of departure only proved a new evidence of his desire to stay; until at length, instead of bidding her farewell, he gave his faith to her for ever, and received her troth in return. The whole passed so suddenly, and arose so much out of the immediate impulse of the moment, that ere the Master of Ravenswood could reflect upon the consequences of the step which he had taken, their lips, as well as their hands, had pledged the sincerity of their affection." That is all. The great scene of the book is dismissed in a paragraph! They then begin to talk business, like two stock-brokers. It is as if in the play (which, to do justice to the Lyceum, is far finer than the novel) Mr. Irving and Miss Terry had their love-scene behind a screen, so that the audience could not see them. It is as if Mr. Stanley, in "In Darkest Africa," merely remarked in a foot-note, "By the way, it was about this time that I found Emin." What are we to say of a novelist who makes a great parade of his forces when he is starting off on his expedition, and then lays down his arms at first sight of the enemy? What an opportunity Scott had in this story! How miserably he fails to rise equal to it! When I think of what Ouida might have done with Edgar Ravenswood and Lucy Ashton I have no heart to write another word. Yet, I think, I have already shown conclusively why there is need for lady novelists. May they double in number yearly.

* Doubtless Ouida is truly great, but we really cannot remember her without a peer.—ED. SPEAKER.

THE AFTERGLOWS OF AUTUMN.

AUTUMN! How many blended elements are comprehended in that name! There is fruition, but also the sense of approaching decay. The glorious result of spring's sowing and summer's maturing is here; but the feeling of the nearing chills of winter and the long waiting until nature's resurrection-day in spring are not without pain. The freshness of the foliage is gone; June's sweetly tender green leaves are bronzed; but the harder air is the more exhilarating to the sportsman, who requires bracing up for the coming winter's close work in town. Everywhere we find

> "Autumn laying here and there
> A fiery finger on the leaves."

Now winged seeds ride upon the air like insects, armed with grapnels to seize what comes first within their reach. Now the spider executes its curious network, which from the branches hangs in early morn studded with crystal forms. Wearily the bees move from flower to flower; for now the flowers are fading, and the honey of nature's passion is drying up.

The beauty of the season is charming. As the sun throws its departing glory on the western sky, and flushes the heavens with glorious afterglow, so the departing year throws before it the grandeur of autumn to ward off depression and discontent. There is the rich burnished bronze of the oak; other trees are red, of many tints up to the gaudiest scarlet; or yellow, from the wan gold of the primrose to the deep orange of the tiger-lily; or purple, from light lilac to the dark velvet of the pansy. All the hues are so blended and softened together in parts, that in a copse we cannot tell where one begins and another ends. It is nature's spectrum, inimitably grand.

At no season of the year are the sunsets more glorious; never do the clouds hang with such gaudy colouring of red and gold. No phenomenon in nature can compare with the brilliant transformation-scene of an autumn afterglow, as in the evening it flushes up the eastern horizon with rich roseate hue, tinges the zenith clouds with glory, leaving in the flushed west, "islands all lovely in an emerald sea;" and then deepening into bright crimson, brings out into bold relief the circlet of flaming mountain-peaks, as if a great conflagration were below the horizon.

Some years ago commenced the most brilliant autumn afterglows that have ever been witnessed in this country. They have continued with gradually decreasing grandeur, though still they are glorious. Their appearance has arrested the attention of the physicist, and has given rise to much speculation as to the cause of the remarkable colouring. What is the source of the immense wealth of the various shades of red which observers in different parts of the country have so much admired? Lately we saw it to perfection. After the sun had gone below the horizon, the clouds in the east suddenly became tinged with hectic light to the zenith, whereas in the west they had more of a neutral tint; while, below that, the rich ruddy, fairylike light clothed all the trees with a golden sheen. What lightened up the *eastern* clouds with colour? Was the effect produced by the light becoming coloured in its passage through the atmosphere by an excess of water-vapour in the air? Or was it the result of a superabundance of atmospheric dust due to the late tremendous eruptions of volcanoes? Overhead, deep unfathomable blue possessed the cloudless sky; and as the lower stratum of air in the western sky, with its larger particles of dust which reflect white light, ceased to be illuminated, the depth and fulness of the blue above became more intense. Gradually, as the eye descended from the deep blue canopy, it observed the softening of the blue into the green. Here and there the wonderful greenness of a clear space in the sky became intensified by contrast with the rose-coloured clouds which enveloped it.

It has now been conclusively demonstrated that the air is densely impregnated with dust. Near a large town there are millions of dust-particles in a cubic inch of the air; and in very clear districts, far away from the pollution of towns, there are still thousands in the cubic inch. Now dust is the cause of the glorious colours of the sunsets. It may come from the sea-brine, or town-smoke, or dissolved meteors ever being attracted into the earth's atmosphere. When we look into the clear blue sky overhead, we see the light selectively reflected from small particles of dust, which scatter the colours of short wave-lengths, and the blue alone is visible. But when we lower our eyes in any direction (not towards the sun), we observe the blue gradually changing to blue-green and rose colour. The light which enters the atmosphere from the west has had much of its blue thrown out by reflection before it has reached the part of the northern sky into which we are looking, and is, therefore, destitute of blue. But where the particles of dust are not large enough to reflect the red, green only is reflected by the sky; the red passing on to the clouds far to the east of us. Some of the most beautiful and delicate rose tints, too, are formed by the air cooling, and depositing its moisture on the dust-particles. The increased size of these particles arrests and scatters the red rays when the haze glows with a strange aurora-like light.

As the sun sinks, the temperature of the air begins to fall, and the particles in the *east* first lose the sun, being thus first cooled. Accordingly the rays in that direction are least sifted by the large water-clad particles of dust, and the *red* colour is there more distinct than in the north and south. The particles overhead, also, become gradually cooler, and attract the water-vapour; they, too, increase in size, pass overhead, and descend in the west to form the aurora afterglow. In autumn sunsets, when the lower air is generally chilly, even down to hoar-frost, the water-clad particles get frozen, and the red light streams with rare brilliancy, causing all reddish and coloured objects to glow with a stronger brightness. We see the dead beech leaves glowing with a rare lustre, and all the red-tiled roofs or red sandstone gables of the houses shining out brilliantly, as if painted with vermilion.

These afterglows, then, that charm us in autumn, are caused by the presence of an infinite number of dust-particles in the air—"the gay motes that people the sunbeams." The greater the amount of these particles, the more the western sky is illuminated at sunset, and the longer is the twilight. The western afterglow is caused by the transmitted light being reflected to the earth by small dust-crystals floating in the air; and long after the sun has sunk below the green and billowy horizon, these suspended particles make the heavens brilliantly luminous in reflected glory. Strange is it that the grandeur of the heavens in the afterglows which follow in the train of autumn's setting sun depends for its very existence, as well as for its unrivalled display, on dust-particles and water-vapour. Yet how simple are all the elements of beauty in nature when carefully analysed.

"RAVENSWOOD" AT THE LYCEUM.

IN laying hands upon a masterpiece of fiction the playwright runs a double risk. It is never an easy task to transfer the interest of a novel to the stage, to reconstruct in a special atmosphere and under special laws a story which was originally created under totally different conditions. This difficulty is enormously enhanced when the story is already rooted in the popular imagination, when its characters hang in the perpetual picture-gallery